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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KINGSTON 002346

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DEPARTMENT FOR G, DRL, S/P, WHA/CAR AND WHA/PPC

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TAGS: KDEM PHUM PREL JM

SUBJECT: JAMAICA - DEMOCRACY PROMOTION STRATEGIES FOR WHA

FOCUS COUNTRIES

REF: A. STATE 169581

1B. STATE 187264

1C. STATE 156961

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Thomas C. Tighe. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

Introduction

11. (C) P.J. Patterson, Prime Minister since 1992, has announced his intention to step down no later than March 2006, and possibly as early as late 2005. Four senior members of his ruling Peoples National Party (PNP) will contest an internal PNP election to succeed Patterson as party president and prime minister. General elections must be held by October 2007, but under the Westminster system Patterson (or his successor) need not wait until then to call early elections. On the other side of the political aisle, Leader of the Opposition Bruce Golding, who replaced former PM Edward Seaga at the helm of the Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) only in May 2005 following Seaga's 30-year run as party leader, is attempting to position the JLP to win the next elections and form the national government for the first time since 1989.

12. (C) Other important developments in the near term include the arrival at Post of our newly confirmed COM, Ambassador Brenda Johnson, in November, and the February 2006 scheduled transition from the IGOH to a new Haitian government. A successful democratic transfer of power in Haiti will remove an issue that became a major bilateral irritant due to the Patterson government's suspicion of USG complicity in Aristide's departure from Haiti in February 2004.

13. (C) Paragraphs 4 through 12 contain Post's responses to the questions set forth Ref raised Ref A.

Key areas of democratic deficit and the 3-5 most important desired outcomes over next 6-8 months:

14. (C) Though justly proud of its unbroken run of legitimate, democratic transfers of power since independence in 1962, Jamaica today faces serious problems that do not (yet) necessarily constitute a democratic deficit, but could lead to one. Rampant corruption - from barely concealed interaction between PNP and JLP politicians at all levels with "businessmen", "community leaders" or "political allies" known or suspected to be involved in narcotics trafficking or other criminal activities, to the involvement in or toleration of illicit behavior by members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force - sustains a widespread perception among the electorate that both parties are bereft of real ideas and unable to take meaningful steps to address corruption. Violent crime is a major problem, and Jamaica currently boasts one of the top three per-capita murder rates in the world. Public concern about violent crime, coupled with a widespread perception that the JCF and GOJ are unable to contain it, opens a "credibility gap" between government and governed. Meanwhile, economic stagnation, rising oil prices, a decline in the agricultural sector due to the end of long-standing European sugar quotas, high levels of debt, and high unemployment/underemployment rate. A sustained decline in Jamaica's all-important tourism sector due to a U.S. economic downturn could further exacerbate the situation.

Six-month diplomatic and programmatic strategy:

15. (C) Anticipating a change in the governing party's political leadership in early-to-mid 2006, as well as a simultaneous increase in political posturing in the run-up to the national elections due by late 2007, Post recommends:

- more visible USG efforts to reinforce/support appropriate GOJ crime-fighting initiatives, with an emphasis on crime that directly or indirectly impacts U.S. society or interests, such as narcotics trafficking (with its attendant violence) and official corruption;

- increasing our efforts to ostracize those engaged in official corruption by using INA 212(f) and other appropriate consular tools to cancel non-immigrant visas of corrupt

police, businesspersons, and politicians. The ability to travel to the U.S. for familial-, educational-, recreational- and other reasons is extremely important and/or desirable to most Jamaicans, making the potential loss of this privilege a source of considerable leverage.

- coupling anti-crime initiatives with advocacy for legislation allowing for asset forfeiture, plea bargaining, etc.;
- exploring ways of filling the Jamaica Defense Force's (JDF) officer training void (precipitated by recently announced, heavy UK and Canadian reductions in long-standing programs for initial officer training and aviation training of JDF personnel) to ensure that Venezuela, Cuba, or China do not exploit the situation; and
- exploring ways to strengthen the judicial system with technological assistance, basic equipment (such as court stenography machines); training in the proper disposition of cases; vetting of personnel in sensitive positions, etc.

¶6. (C) Because PM Patterson has for so long failed to act decisively against corrupt subordinates or associates, his periodic public utterances on the issue are often dismissed as lip service, and temporary public outrage at each new scandal is quickly replaced by resigned acceptance of the reality and inevitability of corruption. In the sunset of his political life, mindful of his legacy and with no more elections to contest personally, Patterson could perhaps afford to act decisively against corruption now in a way he has never done; however, with what is projected to be a close general election looming on the horizon, he is unlikely to take meaningful steps out of concern that a truly impartial stance against corruption could complicate his party's chances of winning yet again. JCF/JDF successes against violent, often politically connected criminal gangs in the coming months, followed by swift prosecution of suspects would increase public confidence in the justice system, the JCF, and the GOJ. The end of the hurricane season should allow the GOJ to focus on addressing economic problems without worrying about every tropical storm reported over the horizon.

Major needs from the Department or other parts of the USG, including resources, high-level visits, public diplomacy-related efforts, that would support accomplishing these objectives

¶7. (C) Developments in more troubled neighboring countries rightly absorbing greater attention by senior Department and Washington officials, but USG actions and opinions carry great weight with the GOJ and the Jamaican public, even when they disagree with us. Properly conceived and executed, more frequent public engagement on Jamaican issues (such as those described in Sections A and B, above) by senior USG officials would go a long way here, as was demonstrated in the trafficking in persons (TIP) arena. Washington- and Embassy-based discussion of TIP initially met with considerable resistance from the GOJ, which did not understand the problem, and which initially viewed our efforts as unfounded and unjustly punitive. By repeatedly engaging with officials, private sector contacts, and particularly the public diplomacy engagement via radio and television, however, G/TIP and Embassy efforts eventually resulted in a reluctant acknowledgment of the problem, public awareness of it, and a promising GOJ campaign to address TIP.

Major impediments, including resource, political, or structural, to accomplishing these outcomes:

¶8. (C) Apart from the Department's anticipated FY 2006 resource constraints, possible and probable impediments are discussed in Paragraphs 9, 10, 12 and 13.

Other countries, organizations or groups with significant influence on GOJ:

¶9. (C) As a founding member of Caricom, the GOJ often looks first to fellow anglophone CARICOM states for political and moral support, particularly in coordinating its positions in a UN or OAS context. Despite Caricom's notable lack of political agility - witness its months-long dithering on Haiti during the crisis surrounding Aristide's 2004 departure - due in large measure to the consensus principle on which it operates, the dream of ever increasing Caribbean integration is a strong one in Jamaica, and any conceivable future GOJ would be likely to continue at least to pay lip service to this ideal.

¶10. (C) An able politician who came of age politically during mentor Prime Minister Michael Manley's economically disastrous 1970's experiment with "democratic socialism" (both the JLP and PNP grew out of the country's labor movement, but only PNP members still address each other as "Comrade"), Patterson's thinking has evolved considerably,

and he well understands globalization, market forces, and the importance of the U.S. (as a major consumer of Jamaican goods, and as a source of tourists, foreign investment, and remittances) to Jamaica's economy, while maintaining a profound ambivalence about, even a mistrust of, the USG. A staunch believer in multilateralism as the surest way for smaller states to ensure their voices (and votes) are heard by wealthier countries, Patterson in particular has sought to work with the G-77 countries (which Jamaica currently chairs) to enhance the UN's role and authority, and to make the UN more responsive to the types of "development" issues important to Jamaica. Given the small size and relative paucity of energy resources in many CARICOM states (Trinidad being a notable exception), Patterson was the first CARICOM head of government to conclude a "PetroCaribe" petroleum agreement with Venezuela. Mindful of USG concerns about GOV motives without ever specifically acknowledging them, however, Patterson publicly emphasized that there were "no strings attached" to his oil accord with Hugo Chavez.

Key areas of democracy promotion supported by GOJ:

11. (SBU) Despite serious disagreement with the USG over Haiti, the GOJ supports the planned elections in Haiti. As a member of Caricom, the GOJ is attentive to and supportive of the protection of democracy in member states, but, outside of Caricom and UN fora, is often reluctant to speak strongly on such issues.

Evaluate consequences of pursuing proactive reform agenda:

12. (C) Some senior GOJ officials resent what they perceive as general USG neglect of the bilateral relationship interspersed with crisis-generated periods of engagement. For example, during his valedictory speech to PNP loyalists at the annual party conference in September 2005, on the eve of his departure for New York to attend UNGA, Patterson alluded derisively to telephone calls he received from numerous, unnamed world leaders (one of whom was the Secretary) to discuss the hectic final negotiations of UN

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reform issues. Patterson and other senior GOJ officials have told us publicly and privately that they would welcome increased USG engagement - particularly within a CARICOM context.

13 (C) At the same time, however, Patterson and some within his party might be inclined to suspect or resent a high-profile, USG-backed "reform agenda" given that the PNP has been in government since 1989, and in a position to have done more about Jamaican problems. With elections looming, the JLP could be expected to attempt to exploit any indication that the USG viewed the PNP government with disfavor, particularly on corruption or competency grounds. Further complicating matters are troubling indications of serious corruption issues involving some prominent JLP figures, and their concern over the potential ramifications of increased USG attention to such matters is something of a wild card. A "marriage of convenience" with similarly concerned PNP counterparts to oppose our efforts could not be ruled out. In any event, greater USG engagement in opposing corruption and strengthening the judiciary would have to be carefully crafted to avoid the perception that it was intended to influence the electoral outcome or otherwise violate Jamaican sovereignty.

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